

MY CREDO FROM A THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

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Isahaya, Nagasaki

September, 1983

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This paper is my credo, which expresses my own belief depending on Holy Bible, traditional credos in Christian church and valuable achievements of theological scholars.

Before beginning on my credo, however, we need to consider what a credo is. Let's cite an example of Deuteronomy 26:5-9, an ancient Israelite credo, to answer this question.

"And you shall make response before the Lord your God,
'A wandering Aramean was my father; and he went down into Egypt and sojourned there, few in number; and there he became a nation, great, mighty, and populous. And the Egyptians treated us harshly, and afflicted us, and laid upon us hard bondage. Then we cried to the Lord the God of our fathers, and the Lord heard our voice, and saw our affliction, our toil, and our oppression; and the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with great terror, with signs and wonders; and he brought us into this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey (Deut. 26:5-9).

The theme of this credo is God's action in the historical events, which was proclaimed in the cult over and over.¹ Then the credo in the cult played the central role to form the amphictyony which was the league of twelve tribes of Israel.² Though it was only Jacob and Benjamin tribes who did go through the exodus, through the credo other ten tribes could be told the significant Israelite history.³ Though most people who experienced the exodus died on the way to Canaan (Numbers 32:11-13), through the credo their descendants felt as if they stood before Moses, where they tasted their fathers' exodus.⁴ That is, Israel was religiously united by sharing the common memory of God's deliverance which is due to His promise to their religious ancestor, Jacob who is "A wandering Aramean."⁵

The credo of Deut. 26:5-9 transmitted the religious memory of exodus generation to generation and people to people among different tribes, strengthened the union of Israel and protected it from the Canaanitic natural religion and syncretism.⁶

Let's cite another example from the New Testament.

Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of our religion:
He was manifested in the flesh,
vindicated in the Spirit,
seen by angels,
preached among the nations,
believed on in the world,
taken up in glory.

(I Tim. 3:16)

The latter poetic six verses are regarded as "a quotation from a liturgical confession or hymn,"⁷ that is, a credo. The central theme of this credo is Jesus Christ, His absolute majesty to be able to reunite heaven and earth.⁸ Even if there are some variations of expression, the basic concept of Christian credo is "Jesus Christ is Lord," which is formed against the Emperor worship.⁹ J.C. Beker interpreted that a credo is formed to defend church from "threat of heresy."¹⁰ Within the range of possibility of the background of the letter to Timothy, the influence of Jewish, Jewish Christian, Gnostic, and/or Mariconite heresy is considered.¹¹ But the creedal hymn of I Tim. 3:16 was not created by the author of the letter, but quoted. That is to say, an ancient credo was utilized to strengthen the foundation of church in the letter, because firming its self-identity is the best way to combat with enemies from inside and outside, and the credo was available for it.¹² Whatever the enemy of church was, the ancient credo was quoted to reapply to the church in some different situation, and such a reapplication of an ancient credo to a different situation is depending on the supreminent lordship of Jesus Christ. Only the perfection of Christ's

lordship can defend His church from any threat and maintain the body soundly.

Through these two typical credos in the Old and New testaments, we can easily understand the following words of A. Richardson;¹³

The traditional creeds, if understood historically and used in the tradition of liturgical worship, have great value as an expression of the unity of the faith, linking ancient and modern believers in a communion of saints which knows not limitation of space and time.

Then, this paper considers the credo to be the basic factors of faith, which unites the community of faith, supports it from within, and rejects various heretical thoughts. It is also important the credo is understood in relation to liturgical worship.¹⁴

Now, the aim of this paper is clarifying my own faith and showing it to prove God's dominion and love living in our reality. The credo should have universal validity as a Christian credo, and so the essence of my credo is "Jesus Christ is Lord." However, in order to understand our Lord, Jesus Christ, well, this paper treats Christian theology widely. In the next chapter doctrine of God is treated; His great Lordship over the whole universe and mysterious Trinitarianism are confirmed. The third chapter treats doctrine of man; where man's sin and the necessity to be liberated from it are confirmed. Then, I confirm Jesus Christ as our savior with the consideration of His unique function in both heaven and earth, in the fourth. The fifth chapter deals with Holy Spirit as the third Person of the Trinity God and confirms the indispensable help of Him for us on the earth. In the sixth church as the body of Christ is considered, and we search the concrete way of our salvation; here the Word and the sacraments are emphasized as the very power to

transform each of us and whole world into new figures
which centers on Jesus Christ.

The last chapter summarizes this paper as "my credo".

CHAPTER 2

GOD

Almighty God

Anselm uses the words of "something than which a greater cannot be thought" to express God.¹ This paper agree with him on this definition. Then, in this paper, the word of "Almighty" is applied to showing the greatness of God which is as much as we cannot consider.

Almighty God is the absolute being who has the omnipotent authority over all other beings, because only He is "self-caused, he creates himself," and "the source of everything else."² Kaufman calls His perfect independence "the aseity of God" which signifies "the reality who comes from himself alone,"³ and Paul Tillich calls it "the ground of being."⁴ Without Him, nothing comes into being nor can exist. Only He can give us the mainspring, courage and meaning to be.

My belief in God the Almighty comes from the Bible. God is the Lord of the whole universe, because "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth (Gen.1:1)." Everything which God desired came into existence by His Almighty Words. Especially man was created in the image of God; God blessed man and let man have dominion over every living thing on the earth (Gen. 1:27-28).

God the Almighty created not only space but also time, so He is also the Lord of time.

And God said, "Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to separate the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years,..." And it was so (Gen. 1:14-15).

As Tillich suggests, we are aware of two kinds of time, Chronos and Kairos.⁵ "Chronos is clock time, time measured in seconds, minutes, hours, days and years;" while

chronos "can never be calculated, and can only be apprehended by means of vision, that is, an intuition akin to faith."⁶ God "has made everything beautiful in its time (Ec. 3:11)." But, time in the Gospel centers on "the coming of Jesus Christ," which is "the great Kairos."⁷ Anyway, it is God the Almighty who creates and controls time, both Chronos and Kairos. Jesus Christ says, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has fixed by his own authority (Acts 1:7)." Because of His lordship of time, God's Creation is never locked in the past event of Genesis. Thus the history of our world, which is the sequence of God's Creation, has been under His dominion from the beginning till the end.

Trinity of God

By Kaufman, "God makes himself known as one-in-three, three-in-one," and so "He must be conceived as simultaneously Father, Son, and Holy Spirit."⁸ Wherever God the Father or the Son or Holy Spirit is, other two Persons also exist.⁹ However, we must consider God the Trinity through Jesus Christ who was visible and His words which could be listened to and written down; that is, "The trinitarian manifestation of the divine ground is Christocentric for man."¹⁰

I believe in Jesus Christ, God the Son, who was born, crucified, dead on the earth, then resurrected and ascended into heaven. I believe in God in heaven, whom Jesus Christ called "Father" and "Lord of heaven and earth", who sent Jesus Christ to reveal Himself for us. I believe in Holy Spirit whom Jesus Christ occasionally called "the Helper" and "the Spirit of Truth", who is sent to stay in and with us on the earth and helps us to understand God. I also believe God, the Father, the Son and Holy Spirit are one Trinity God, who has three aspects of "dominion, and

possession,"¹¹ and who has created and dominated the heaven and earth by His love from the beginnig till the end.

CHAPTER 3
MAN AND SIN

Original Sin

I believe God the Almighty created man from the dust in His own image, and man was good in the beginning (Gen. 1:27, 31; 2:7). Man is characterized by the Imago Dei, and distinguished from other creatures.¹ That is, only man is able to have personal relationship of "I and Thou" with God in His love.² For the personal relationship, God gave man special ability to respond to Him "creatively and freely," in which man had a resemblance to God (Imago Dei), though man's ability is never perfect.³ Man was held dominion over every living things (Gen. 1:28), in which man has also a similar image of God, but man is never equal to God.⁴ Man couldn't be satisfied with creative wisdom, freedom, and dominion which God allowed man by His love, rather man broke the personal intimate relationship with God by using the special ability given as the personal factors to be responsible.⁵ As man destroyed the relationship of love, his action of disobedience is sin.⁶ Kaufman explains the fall in Genesis story as "the primeval historical event;" that is, "It was the event or process in which man lost the childlike innocence which had characterized his prior existence (cf. Gen. 3:7)."⁷ Then, I believe all human beings have fallen into original sin in the historical process, and all people are necessarily born in the state of "a certain separation from God" and "from fellows."⁸

"God alone is the ultimate authority in human life and the ultimate refuge amid all the perils of historical existence;" nevertheless, man refuses the indispensable God's shelter.⁹ Original sin is man's natural tendency

to endeavor to exist independently of God, the Creator, in spite of its impossibility.¹⁰ Then, the reckless "separation from God" is causing various evils.¹¹

Egocentrism, Estrangement, Death and Despair

According to the Genesis story of the fall, the basis of sin is regarded as "unbelief" and "pride."¹² That is, man's sin starts when he has a distrust of God, as if Adam and Eve doubted God's word and believed the word of serpent; and when he attempts to become like God, as if Adam and Eve ate the fruit.¹³ Kazo Kitamori points out "self-love" or "egoism" as the center of sin.¹⁴ "Self-love" or "egoism" may be the origin of "unbelief" and "pride." Anyway, man who rejects God's authority and protection relies upon his own judgment and efforts; and this egocentrism, which is opposed to theocentrism, seems to be a main point of sin.

Kaufman says, "because of his new self-centered autonomy, man was alienated from God and his fellows, and so his autonomy increased, so did his alienation."¹⁵ Tillich further points out that man who is estranged from "the ground of his beings" is estranged from "other beings" and even from "himself."¹⁶ Thus man becomes unsettled all the time, and his anxiety by losing "the ground of his beings" ironically begins to look for another ground of his being, and this results in idolatry which he invents after all.¹⁷ It corresponds with Luther's view, that is, "man must worship and if he does not worship God he will worship the devil."¹⁸

Jesus Christ tells us to center our beings on God;

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart,
and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is
the great and first commandment (Mt. 22:37-38).

In reality, however, excessive self-love is a formidable

obstacle to this commandment. Jesus Christ also says; "He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for my sake will find it (Mt. 10:39). Indeed, we can not abandon whole our egocentrism, self-love, and pride which are situated in the middle of the problem of sin; unless we die. So I believe death as "the result of sin;" as Romans 5:12 says.¹⁹

Therefore as sin came into the world through on man and death through sin, and so death spread to all men sinned.

Unless we give up our egocentrism, self-love, and pride with our lives, we are never delivered from sin; if it is true, we must be in the depth of despair. It is but too realistic. Kaufman sharply touches on our sore place;²⁰

Even --- nay, especially ! --- in the most characteristic tasks of man and woman --- daily work and the bearing of children --- there would be pain and misery and sorrow, and human life would finally come to its end in hopeless and apparently meaningless disintegration, in death; "... you are dust, and to dust you shall return (Gen. 3:19)."

We have no salvation, unless we are reconciled to God, the Creator.

CHAPTER 4

JESUS CHRIST

Reconciliation in Jesus Christ

I believe we have to be reconciled to God, in order to be liberated from our sin. But we can not reconcile to God by ourselves, because it is man who was refused the intimate relationship of love with God. It is only forgiveness on God's side that can save man from sin and recover the proper relationship between God and man.¹ Therefore, "God broke into history in Jesus Christ, loosening an impulse of reconciliation."² I believe God the Father sent Jesus Christ as the "second Adam" not to punish our sin but to deliver us from our sin.³

We can not give up our lives, egocentrism, self-love on the earth, and so Jesus Christ, who has no sin and has not to die, "voluntarily accepted his death" as our Redeemer,⁴ where God's self-sacrificing love (Agape) is shown.⁵ We are responsible for our sin in anxiety, sorrow, and death; but Christ's obedience has overcome Adam's disobedience, grace has overcome sin, and life has overcome death.⁶

Threefold Office of Jesus Christ

I believe "the offices of prophet, priest and king" are entirely fulfilled in Jesus as the Christ.⁷

Jesus as the Christ fulfils the office of the prophet because he brings --- rather, because he is in his own person --- the final and decisive declaration of the will of God to his people (Acts 3:26).⁸

This office of the prophet seems to be understood as the communicable role of the Word, Jesus Christ, suggested by Kaufman: " 'Word' is a symbol drawn from human commu-

nication," and the Word incarnated plays the role of "the communication of God to man" by showing God's "inward being for us" and by "establishing community."⁹ That is, Jesus Christ has revealed God's will through His whole life on the earth, and through church as His Body after His Resurrection.¹⁰ Jesus is not caused by himself, but God the Father; his proclamation centers on "the approaching Kingdom of God," which is "the designation for God's cause."¹¹ Jesus is a prophet, so far as he communicates God's will to us.

Jesus as the Christ fulfils the office of the priest by the priestly offering of himself as sacrifice for the removal of sins and by thus laying the foundation of a new and everlasting covenant (Mark 14:58; Matt. 26:68; Heb.13:20).¹²

This priestly office seems to be understood through His symbol of servant, "who obeys the lord's commands."¹³ According to Kaufman, Jesus "freely and willingly gave up his own wishes and desires to serve God's will."¹⁴ That is, Jesus did not only "Proclaim" God's will as the Word, but also "acted" as God's servant, being the "instrument" through which "God's will was done."¹⁵ Every priest serves God, offering gifts and sacrifices for sins (Heb. 5:1). Jesus Christ is also "a high priest (Heb. 5:10)," but He is unique because He offered Himself to redeem us from our sin as a flawless sacrifice (Heb. 9:14).¹⁶ This perfect priestly action on the Cross is regarded as His obedient deed as God's servant.¹⁷

Jesus as the Christ fulfils the office of the King, as by his resurrection he is raised up to reign and thereby raises his people, not only to new life in obedience to God (Rom. 6:4-14), but also to share in his royal rule (I Peter 2:9; Rev. 5:10), until he returns in glory to execute judgment (Matt 25:34,40; Acts 10:42; 17:31).¹⁸

This office of the king seems to come from the sonship of

God in Jesus Christ, for the relation between God and Jesus Christ is "more than functional," but "ontological"¹⁹ "relationship not shared by anything else,"²⁰ in the symbol "Son of God." That is, God and Jesus Christ is essentially same,²¹ and so Jesus Christ can share God's kingship or lordship in heaven.

Then, with his threefold office of Jesus Christ, He is perfectly competent to do His great work of Atonement.

Jesus Christ as "God-man"

Jesus Christ is the second person of the Trinity of God.²² He has existed as the Word with God the Father from the beginning; He was also born from virgin Mary and lived on the earth as the Word incarnated (John 1:1, 14). That is, "Jesus Christ is at once truly God and truly man."²³ As He is God and man, He can mediate between heaven and earth and remedy our estrangements.

Jesus Christ was born, suffered and died; in this historical event God revealed Himself to us. He was also resurrected and ascended into heaven; by this mystery His divine nature has been believed and preached. Then, with the great help of Holy Spirit, He is still working as prophet, priest and king, through His mystical body, that is, church. I believe "Jesus Christ is Lord" who creates, loves and saves us.

CHAPTER 5

HOLY SPIRIT

The Third Person of the Trinity God

I believe in Holy Spirit as the third person of the Trinity God; Holy Spirit is equal with God the Father and the Son in the essence, and has the character of person.¹ Holy Spirit proceeds from God the Father and the Son, and co-operates with them in any work.² But Holy Spirit works on us especially as "the ever-present Companion" who comes into our possession.³

J. Haroutunian explains, "The Holy Spirit is personal as the Spirit of God and Jesus Christ, who are Persons."⁴ Wesley also stresses "the personal nature" of Holy Spirit as "the 'administrator' of redemption."⁵ It is not easy to grasp the personal character of Holy Spirit from the term of "spirit" which is represented by metaphors such as "wind", "water" or "breath". According to Kaufman, however, these metaphors express "the inmost part of man" and the term "spirit" means "the depths of man's personal being."⁶ Kaufman says, "when God is spoken of as 'spirit', man's relation to him is interpreted in analogy with this most intimate and personal and inward relation in which men stand to each other."⁷ Then, I believe that Holy Spirit helps us to know God's Truth through some deep personal communication depending on His original nature of Person.

The Role of Holy Spirit

Jesus Christ was born from the Virgin Mary by Holy Spirit, and Holy Spirit further came down upon Him when He was baptized. Since "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with Holy Spirit and with power (Acts 10:38)," He preached

the Gospel, doing good. Then, after His resurrection, Christ imparted Holy Spirit with His power to the disciples for mission, saying "As the Father has sent me, even so I send you (John 20:21)."

I believe in Holy Spirit as the Helper, who dwells with and within us to teach us and testify regarding Christ after His Ascension. Paul says, "the Spirit helps us in our weakness (Rom. 8:26)." Through the indwelling Spirit we are led to God the Father and the Son regardless of our original weakness. Holy Spirit always appeals to our souls for the right Christian life in the depth of our minds; He is, so to say, "the earthly vicar of the heavenly Father and Son."⁸

But I also believe in Holy Spirit as "an agent in creation."⁹ From the beginning "the Spirit of God" has existed and participated in God's Creation (Gen. 1:2). Adam became a living being when God "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life (Gen. 2:7)." Holy Spirit has been "the principle of life in all living things,"¹⁰ and He is still working as "the creative energy and sustaining power of the universe."¹¹

I believe that God's grace such as life, wisdom, faith, pardon and redemption is given through Holy Spirit.¹² "The prevenient grace of the Spirit" is given "at birth" with life for everybody, where Holy Spirit works to turn him to God individually.¹³ But we can find the grace of the Spirit rather in Christian community, as I Corinthians 14:12 says: "since you are eager for manifestations of the Spirit, strive to excel in building up the church."¹⁴

Church itself is the grace of Holy Spirit. It is the body of Christ which is mystically united and operated by Holy Spirit, and a medium to carry God's grace to believer in Christ.¹⁵ Then, "the work of the Spirit in the church has been associated with the Word and the sacraments as

the principal 'means of grace'."16

When the Bible was written, Holy Spirit worked to show God's Will there. When the Bible is read and interpreted in preach, and when the Bible and preach are listened to, Holy Spirit works to teach God's truth for us. "Without the Spirit the scripture is powerless."17 Likewise, with the great help of the Holy Spirit, our sin is washed away in Baptism and we are being changed to Christ-likeness through the Lord's Supper. The grace is never gained to all mechanically,18 but the work of Holy Spirit is effective on "the responsible co-operation of man."19

I believe, however, the Holy Spirit dwells with and within us to help, console and guide us to God the Father and the Son at any time, even when we are not aware of Him or deny Him.20

CHAPTER 6

CHURCH

Church as the Body of Christ

I believe in church as the body of Christ. Christ is our head, which means He is the highest ruler and the originator of church, His body and He has the administrative role of the brain to the body.¹ Then each member is a part of the body of Christ, and called to participate in Christ's mind and mission with the respective role (Ephesians, 4:11-16). In other words, Christ is the grapevine and church members are the branches (John 15:5). In any metaphor, life and power of church have its heavenly source in Jesus Christ, and I believe in the invisible heavenly foundation in the center of church community on earth. The visible church is the representation of the invisible church of heaven.² For church member clings to the heavenly foundation with the help of Holy Spirit, he is purified and sanctified to be a part of the body of Christ regardless of his original weakness.³

Ministry

I believe all Christians are invited to general ministries of "love, justice and service."⁴ The ministries should be formed not only for the community of faith but also for the world. When each of us works properly as a part, the church grows up and builds itself as the body of Christ who came to show God's love in this world.

But, some members are particularly called to "specialized ministries of Word, Sacrament and Order."⁵ They are ordained and have "professional church leadership" in order to encourage and help each member of church to take part in general ministries.⁶ They preach the Gospel

and administer the sacraments as God's instruments; but it is Holy Spirit who "freely works internally" there.⁷

Word and Sacrament

I believe Jesus Christ has revealed God's will through the communicative role of word, not only in His past events, but also in His living body, that is, church.⁸ Therefore, church functions through "the word as a medium of revelation."⁹ The meaning of Gospel can not be understood nor transmitted to others without words.¹⁰ The Bible was written with words, and "the biblical message cannot be interpreted without semantic and hermeneutic principles."¹¹ The Bible in which we find "a history of God's self-revelation to man,"¹² centers on Jesus Christ, "the OT by way of prophecy, the NT by means of proclamation that the expected Redeemer had come."¹³ In preaching, Holy Spirit uses the words of the preacher," in order to enable congregation to understand the truth in Bible "in relation to the situation of their daily lives in the world which Christ came to redeem and which those who are in Christ are called to serve."¹⁴ Credo is also confessed by using words. L. Gilkey says;¹⁵

To say "I believe" means to enter as a self into participate in a communal world under a particular symbolic horizon and involved in particular ways of thinking and knowing, of feeling and experiencing, and of doing, acting, and relating.

So church community is united, supported, and protected from heretical thoughts, through confessing credo.

The Word, however, has become "an object of vision and touch," in Incarnation: the Word incarnated is not only heard, but also seen, felt and tasted, to reveal God, His will and power.¹⁶ That is why "Augustine calls a sacrament 'a visible word.'¹⁷

Calvin says,¹⁸

The sacraments, therefore, are exercises which make us more certain of the trustworthiness of God's Word. And because we are of flesh, they are shown us under things of flesh, to instruct us according to our dull capacity, and to lead us by the hand as tutors lead children.

"Through the incarnation of Christ," the appearance of God's word is changed into God's grace, which we visually receive in sacrament with the mystical help of Holy Spirit; then we can further confirm the belief in God's Word.¹⁹

It is very important that "Christ himself is the true celebrant of the sacraments."²⁰ Now, we know any earthly material such as water, bread and wine "cannot be applied to God."²¹ However, "a symbol, in the most general sense, functions as a 'surplus of signification,'" which is "the residue of the literal interpretation."²² A symbol can express more than the literal sense of the word. "The sacramental material is not a sign but a symbol."²³ Then sacramental symbols are utilized as "media of the Spiritual Presence,"²⁴ evoking "endless exegeses" which are beyond description by word.²⁵

Word is also important to clarify the meaning of the sacrament logically and lead participants to its true purpose.²⁶ Word and sacrament complement each other and deepen our faith.²⁷

Baptism and Lord's Supper

I believe in Baptism and Lord's Supper as sacraments which are "necessary for salvation."²⁸ Jesus Christ commanded His disciples;

Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.
(Mark 16:15-16)

Thus, Baptism confirms the promise of salvation for man. According to Calvin, Baptism does not restore us from the

original sin, but promises us to overcome it.²⁹ So, after Baptism, "we are into the mortification of our flesh," though we start "new life in Christ."³⁰ Baptism is the entrance to take part "in the victory of Christ over all the powers of evil," sharing in His death and resurrection.³¹

Jesus Christ also commanded His disciples to keep the Lord's Supper: "Do this in remembrance of me (Luke 22:19)." Christ held the Last Supper based on the paschal feast, whose centered theme is the salvation of Israel from Egypt, but He gave "the national feast" "a new, deeper, and more universal meaning," by His unique priesthood.³² He has fulfilled His great priesthood by offering Himself as the paschal lamb which completes "the aim of the Old Testament priesthood."³³ Thus, Lord's Supper has to be understood as the meal for the memorial of Christ's death which is based on the paschal feast, completes it, and extremely excels it in the depth of meaning. That is, Lord's Supper recalls His death in relation to Exodus to our minds and let us reenact it in our within for our own salvation.³⁴

The real presence of Christ in Lord's Supper should not be forgotten, even though Jesus died only once. "Christ is present, not in any corporal way, but through the mediation of the Holy Spirit."³⁵ D. G. Dix explains Christ's presence as the followings;

Thus, as when offered in many places He is one Body and not many bodies, so also there is one sacrifice. One High priest is He Who offered the sacrifice which cleanses us. We offer even now that which was then offered, which cannot be exhausted.³⁶

I believe His mystical presence in Lord's Supper, because of His divine being who is superior to space and time. However, Balasuriya suggests us, "the most important aspect is his presence in inviting us to our own response to his sacrifice and the commitment to the society of

time."³⁷ Our faith is empowered to respond with sacrificing our lives on the earth to God in His presence.³⁸ Then, by our own sacrifice, church is truly becoming "the sacrificed Body of Christ," through offering His body in Lord's Supper.³⁹

Lord's Supper has also eschatological meaning. Lord's Supper is "a renewal of the covenant," in which God promises to redeem men in Christ's blood, then leads men to "ultimate liberation in kingdom" of God. So, we get "a foretaste of the heavenly banquet," eating the Bread and drinking the Wine.⁴¹ Lord's Supper is "Christ's eternal priestly act" through earthly church, and performing it is very important "to God and to the church and to a man's soul, for this world and for the next."⁴² Through sharing the body of Christ, a man is empowered and purified: the community is united to one body. In our faith the Bread and the Wine are heavenly food, which become "a remedy against selfishness" and helps to build up the new community which centers on Christ, toward the Kingdom of God.⁴³

Church on the Way to the Kingdom of God

Dix considers "the liturgy formed the very life" of the church and of the individual soul.⁴⁴ Religious liturgy or cult, whether Christian or not, influences each member in the depth of his being, and characterizes the community through its common words and symbols.⁴⁵ So, religious or religious cult is regarded as "a normal ingredient of culture."⁴⁶ N. Berdyaev considers cult as the essential source of culture, as the following quotations show:⁴⁷

Culture is the development of the religious cult, of its differentiation and the unfolding of its content. Philosophy, science, architecture, painting, sculpture, music,

poetry and morality are all integrally comprised in the ecclesiastical cult in an undifferentiated and undeveloped form.

Some belief leads people to a particular "world view, moral and life style," through the religious cult, and creates a new "cultural world."⁴⁸ Such a religious cult or liturgy can also transform a present cultural world, and change its world view, moral and life style.⁴⁹ F.G. Streng says, "Religion is a means of ultimate transformation."⁵⁰ The means of ultimate transformation seems to be applicable not only to an individual but also to a community or to the whole world. Streng thinks religion has both "the power of transformation" and "the cultural forms" that express and release this power.⁵¹

In Christianity, every Sunday worship, Baptism, and Lord's Supper are the forms which express and release the power of transformation with the help of Holy Spirit. Balasuriya stresses the potential energy of church communion to transform the world:⁵²

The Sunday celebration in perhaps the most numerous regular gathering of humanbeings around a common theme that this world knows. If it is vitalized into being truly a sacramental of communion through effective sharing, it can be the most efficacious means of bringing about the radical cultural revolution required among Christians.

The Kingdom of God has been started with Jesus Christ, and it will be completed by the second coming of Christ. Then church is on the way to the Kingdom of God. M. Barth points out two significant elements of church, "love" and "the manifestation of Christ to the World."⁵³ So, Christians are visual "signs of the presence and of the love of Christ."⁵⁴ Church is the eternal community on the earth by clinging to Jesus Christ; and so church has the "communion of Saints" beyond space and time.⁵⁵ All Christians of the past, the present and the future are waiting for the second coming of Christ, clinging to

one body of Christ.⁵⁶ We are weak and sinful, but Christ the head Himself fills and unites His body, church, with His love, and Church filled with His love is incorporated into His act of filling and unifying the whole universe toward the Kingdom of God. Thus, we live in Zwischenzeit of Heilsgeschichte with the tension to wait the coming of Christ.⁵⁷

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

I believe in God the Almighty who creates, dominates and loves the whole universe from the beginning till the end. He is three-in-one; God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit always co-operates to accomplish the purpose of one Trinity God.

I believe man is created by God in His image. God allowed man to have the personal relationship with Him, giving special abilities. But Adam's disobedience to Him estranged man from God; all men have fallen into original sin. Man is created to live in the intimate relationship with God, so the separation from God causes various evils.

I believe God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to reconcile us to Him. So we can communicate with God through Jesus Christ. Jesus was born as a man and offered Himself to redeem our sin as the high priest. God forgives our sin because of this perfect obedience of Him. Jesus Christ was resurrected and ascended into heaven, but He is still working as redeemer through church.

I believe in church as the visible body of Christ. In church the Word transmits the gospel; Baptism confirms the promise of salvation of our sin, and Lord's Supper empowers and purifies us to be a real part of Christ's body. The work of church is done through ministers and all members, with the help of Holy Spirit, to accomplish the kingdom of God.

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